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ABSTRACT

The author describes a method by which parents can help their children learn basic addition facts by playing dominos. (SD)

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TITLE

DOMINOS AS A PRACTICAL SIMULATION GAME THAT PARENTS CAN USE TO TEACH THEIR CHILDREN ADDITION

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TEACHING PARENTS HOW TO MAKE YOUR JOB EASIER

It is the rare math teacher who has a ready answer for the question, "So you're a math teacher! What can you teach me that I can pass on to my children?"

It is the opinion of the author of this article that every math teacher should be ready with a practical, concise, and clear answer to this question.

The enclosed article which shows how to teach children math through dominos is intended as one possible answer.

After the math teacher has had a taste of the success that comes from giving good and practical advise to parents, it is hoped that the math teacher will come up with even better ideas that make the parent's job more practical and the teacher's job easier.

Too often, parents and teachers alike think that reinforcement in math education is a gold star or some other prize for the right answer. This article tries to show how the right answer and having fun while getting the right answer are the best rewards possible for any mathematical endeavor.

Any teacher who wants to get maximum benefit from this article should try teaching his own children addition with dominos before preaching about it. Once you've done it, your recommendations will sound less like preaching and more like the fun that comes from any change of pace variation.

CAREER EDUCATION BEGINS WITH TODDLERS

As a child, I never was much good at mathematics myself.

I learned just enough to get by, but I never learned to like mathematics.

I got a good job in spite of my missing mathematical background.

Does this sound like you? If it does, you're probably in a good position as a worker. You don't have to worry about going back to school to pick up any mathematics you may have missed.

As a parent, you want to be careful if these are your attitudes. You don't want to give your children such a bad taste about mathematics that this lack of interest interferes with school work and job possibilities.

Here is what you can do.

Have a clear idea of exactly what you want. Obviously, you want your child to learn how to count rapidly and accurately according to the child's age. You want the child to enjoy counting rapidly and accurately. You want mathematics to be a usable lifelong multipurpose tool.

This article illustrates how dominos can be used to achieve these purposes.

Don't start off by saying to your child, "I'm going to teach you mathematics by playing dominos."

Even if you don't say this, make sure you realize and act like your objective is to have your child learn how to add.

This requires more than just a good time, winning yourself, or teaching the child how to win.

This is also different from the objective of you explaining everything. The child is to learn how to add as a first step.

First, buy a good set of dominos. Colored dominos are good here to make sure that each number becomes a distinctive entity. Sesame Street has helped you here. Colored dominos can help even more.

Start only with the dominos that go up to the number three, i.e., three dots.

Obviously, you can go beyond three yourself.

Just as obviously, your child is familiar with larger numbers than three.

The point here is that you are going into the area of addition. Work on all the possible combinations of zero, one, two, and three before going any farther.

You can always move up gradually to more and more dominos, even to double twelve.

Play patiently. This means slowly.

For the first 5 or 6 times, lay all the dominos face up. Carefully explain to the child the best move.

Point out that every time the end total of dominos is divisible by five that extra point are gained.

When you start off with dominos only up to three dots, the basic winner combinations will be 2 and 3. When you go up to dominos with five dots winning combinations will be 2 and 3, 4 and 1, and BELIEVE IT OR NOT, 0 and 5.

If the sum total of 5 is too difficult to begin with, just start showing how to place dominos in a chain.

Keep the game going fast. The first couple times around it might be good to forget about any scoring system such as the points connected with end totals that are divisible by five.

Keep score!

Let the child keep score.

Even a toddler can learn to keep score as follows:

Such a graphical approach to keeping score is more than a concession to the child's limited ability. It starts grouping in terms of 5 and 10. As the groupings and numbers get larger and larger, the child has a concrete idea of what these symbols mean.

Before you know it, the decimal system has sunk in.

NEVER give prizes or awards to induce a child to play dominos.

Make winning a prize that is its own reward.

After a while, you will have to accept the fact that your own toddler will be able to beat you at the game you taught him or her.

Just take it in stride. After all, that's part and parcel of being a good parent and a good teacher.

The standard of success is not just a right answer.

The child must have fun while learning.

Be alert to the many sources of fun that emerge spontaneously for each child.

Once the number skills are fun, the child is ready for solid math whether the parent liked it in school or not.

There are also many indirect benefits. Many a parent has caught on to math late in life as a result of making dominos fun for children and grandchildren.